

0. WHEN the US and IRAN were FRIENDS - Story Preface

1. WHEN the US and IRAN were FRIENDS

2. WHEN the FRIENDSHIP was DAMAGED

3. WHEN FRIENDS became ENEMIES

4. ISLAMIC REVOLUTION in IRAN

5. SURRENDER at the IRANIAN EMBASSY

6. TONY MENDEZ and HIS ARGO PLAN

7. THE ARGO ESCAPE from TEHRAN

8. ARGO and ITS AFTERMATH



A secondary school in Tabriz (Iran) was once known as the "American Memorial School of Tabriz." This photo depicts teachers at the school at the start of its 42nd year (in 1923). The picture was reportedly taken on August 30, 1923 and was scanned by Mehran Dilmaghanian from a family album. The sign, at the upper-left corner, reads: "(unintelligible) forty second year Memorial School Tabriz, Iran 1923." Image online via Wikimedia Commons.

Before we examine how an audacious plan to remove six Americans from Iran during the hostage crisis was conceived - and accomplished - we have to revisit a time when America and Iran were friends.

When "Persia" became "Iran," in March of 1935, the country had a diplomatic relationship with the United States. At the time, Americans were battling the Great Depression - like so many other people throughout the world - and were making limited progress toward winning that war.

Iranians, meanwhile, were under the influence of a different type of depression - more of the emotional, than the economic, variety. During the preceding decade, the oil-rich country had undergone (among other things) a change in leaders engineered by outside forces.

Led by a monarchy, whose representatives (called the "Shah") had sat on the "Peacock Throne" for thousands of years, Iran (then Persia) ended-up with a new Shah thanks to a British-inspired coup (in 1921). The new leader was a soldier, called Reza Khan, who had risen to the rank of General ("Mirpanj"). Taking the name "Reza Shah," the former military man founded the "Pahlavi Dynasty."



Pahlavi Crown, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons

A tall, self-reliant man who had been a commoner all of his life - until he placed a specially made crown decorated with diamonds and rubies on his own head - Reza Shah was also referred to by other names, including:

*King of Kings;
Shadow of the Almighty;
Vice Regent of God;
Center of the Universe.*

By helping to engineer Reza Shah's rise to power, British officials (who had been influential in Iran for more than a century) believed their access to Iranian oil - via the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, which the British government controlled - would be assured. Assumptions, however, do not always go as planned.

Although he had come to power with British help, Reza Shah turned to Germany for advice and assistance. When World War II erupted, Iran declared its neutrality. Neither Britain nor the Soviet Union believed Iran could remain neutral, with so many German nationals living within its borders, so both countries joined forces to invade Iran during 1941.

A side effect of the invasion must have rankled Reza Shah. Created a monarch (with the help of the British), he was deposed as a monarch (by the same forces and their ally, the USSR). When he was exiled to South Africa in 1941, the Shah's son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, ascended the throne.

Iranians despised the Brits and Soviets for invading, and occupying, their land. Resentment had already been building in Iran - a country larger than Britain, Germany and France combined - since the country's oil wealth was disproportionately benefitting Britain. Dr. Mossadegh - a future Prime Minister of the country - expressed the thoughts of many Iranians when he once said of Britain:

You do not know how crafty they are. You do not know how evil they are. You do not know how they sully everything they touch. (Mossadegh, quoted by Stephen Kinzer in *All the Shah's Men*, at page 105.)

Iran's breakdown in relations with Britain and the Soviet Union gave America a chance to fill the diplomatic void. During World War II, respect between the two countries increased. After the war, when the U.S. pressured Stalin to remove his troops from the Iranian province of Azerbaijan, relations between the U.S. and Iran became friendly.

Then ... in 1953 ... everything changed.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WHEN-the-US-and-IRAN-were-FRIENDS-ARGO)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WHEN-the-US-and-IRAN-were-FRIENDS-ARGO>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/WHEN-the-US-and-IRAN-were-FRIENDS-ARGO)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/WHEN-the-US-and-IRAN-were-FRIENDS-ARGO>



Oil Fields in Iran

Map online, courtesy University of Michigan.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Oil-Fields-in-Iran>



Reza Khan - Founder of Pahlavi Dynasty

Image online, courtesy photo gallery at Tebyan.net.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Reza-Khan-Founder-of-Pahlavi-Dynasty>



Reza Khan - Leader of Iran

Image of Reza Shah, online courtesy IranPoliticsClub.net.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Reza-Khan-Leader-of-Iran>



Reza Shah - Picking-up Iranian Soil

Image of Reza Shah, shortly before his exile from Iran in 1941. Photo online, courtesy IranPoliticsClub.net.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Reza-Shah-Picking-up-Iranian-Soil>



Mohammad Mosaddegh

Image of Dr. Mohammad Mosaddegh online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Mohammad-Mosaddegh>



Azerbaijan - Iranian Province

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Azerbaijan-Iranian-Province>



Reza Shah - Historic Footage with Soundtrack

Historical footage, online courtesy Iran Live News Channel at YouTube.

English translation of discussion, copyright Iran Live News, all rights reserved. Provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Reza-Shah-Historic-Footage-with-Soundtrack>